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PLAN OF ACTION FOR STATISTICAL DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA IN THE 1990s

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INTRODUCTION

1. After three decades of statistical development in Africa an assessment of achievements, failures and their respective causes seemed called for - especially to develop a focus on tasks to be tackled up to the year 2000. The Fifth Session of the PSD in 1988 therefore requested ECA to undertake assessments of the national statistical capacity of all African countries. Such a comprehensive exercise was deemed necessary to determine whether progress had been made in the eighties to satisfy Africa's needs for data, whether efficient national statistical infrastructures existed and whether domestic and external resources had been optimally used. Widest consultations with African statisticians allowed to generate a picture of possible and desirable developments in the field of statistics in the nineties.

2. The results of 32 country assessments were presented in E/ECA/PSD.6/16 to this Sixth Session of the PSD. In reviewing these country reports it became clear that, despite different legal and administrative set-ups, common features and especially common problems would allow to summarize the conclusions and to present a general framework of recommendations. In order to provide a background for the discussion at this meeting of necessary action in the decade ahead, the ECA secretariat has also prepared a draft Plan of Action (Annex). Once further refined, it could become a framework for member States to rehabilitate their statistical services in the decade ahead.

3. Various actors will be called upon to establish or revitalize national capabilities for quantitative analysis: they range from the highest executive and legislative ranks to technical programme managers, but also include bilateral and multilateral donor agencies. Given the scope of problems affecting statistical services in Africa on one hand and the importance of a functioning system on the other, it will be crucial to obtain high-level political support for the rehabilitation effort. Once the Plan of Action is amended and if it is approved by this Sixth Session of the PSD, it would therefore be submitted to the ECA Conference of Ministers for its consideration.

I. THIRTY YEARS OF STATISTICS IN AFRICA

4. Upon closer scrutiny, the state of statistics in Africa at the end of the 1980s yields a mixed picture. Rather than proclaiming a uniform trend, it is therefore necessary to discuss major factors determining the quality and relevance of statistical production. Rather than recommending standard remedies, a range of possible scenarios for solving problems should, therefore, be considered.

5. The outcome of any evaluation of statistics in Africa depends on the time frame and the success criteria chosen. Compared to the situation immediately following independence, indigenous statistical production has certainly expanded. Substantial experience in the conducting and analysis of censuses and surveys and in the compilation of various statistics from administrative records has been acquired by most countries. Statisticians have been trained by the thousands and are now, even though not necessarily within official statistical services or in the public sector, performing valuable services in the countries. Many countries have become more self-reliant statistically and the number of expatriates working on long-term assignments in national statistical services has decreased. All in all, most countries - even if they need outside assistance for specific large-scale operations or for certain specialized areas - can claim to have established a minimum of statistical services.

6. Yet, the central questions are whether scope and quality of statistical services are in tune with the needs of important users; whether central facts about socio-economic and environmental conditions of African countries can be provided within a reasonable and meaningful time span; whether best use is made of available human and technical resources; and finally, whether based on current tendencies, indigenous statistical production in the nineties is likely to improve and narrow the gap between supply and demand.

Growing needs for quantitative information

7. Before independence, statistical production was very rudimentary, mainly geared to the specific economic interest of the external power. Newly independent countries were, however, well aware of the kind of statistical production most urgently needed: planning for the future required knowledge about the size and structure of populations and about the resource base and its use. Some countries which aimed at rapid industrialization sought to develop adequate economic statistics. The achievements of this initial period, measurable in a marked increase of statistical production, were certainly inspired by the political energies that had led to independence.

8. Yet, at the time, African statisticians were few in number and statistical production depended to a significant extent on expatriates with long-term contracts. Statistical concepts applied in Africa were mostly developed in and for a very different socio-economic context and thus often inadequate for identifying and measuring the determinants of the African environment.

9. The seventies saw a phase of consolidation and substantial expansion of statistical production. Forty-one countries carried out population censuses and the African Household Survey Capability Programme (AHSCP) was established in 1978. Demographic statistics certainly benefitted most from the increase in activities. Concepts began to be fitted to social and economic characteristics of African countries. Yet, as more became known about the determinants of population and as basic economic statistics expanded, other information gaps were painfully felt. For example, the various impacts of the raise in the oil price in 1973 influenced development perspectives and, as a consequence, also statistical needs of planners. The pressure on net oil-importers to manage their resources efficiently became synonymous with the need to know more about them and their use. As demands for data tend to fluctuate in a pro-cyclical fashion with the intensity of a crisis, the call for better information became ever more pronounced.

10. The production of national statistical offices in the eighties could not keep pace with these rapidly increasing data demands, even where budget allocations to statistics and the training of statisticians had expanded. Planners thus had to cope with the fact that basic data, for example on domestic energy consumption patterns, were not available. They also came to realize that other important data sets which would have been necessary for planning a self-reliant future did not exist: hardly an African country knew details about its soil conditions, its forest cover and the rate at which it was depleted, its water resources and use, the scope and quality of its housing and infrastructure.

Factors contributing to demand-supply gap

11. Where data were available, their quality often left much to be desired. Data sets were seldom compatible with each other and could thus not be used for meaningful analysis. Hopes to improve administrative records and use them as a data source did not materialize as bureaucratic systems were not sufficiently developed. Deficiencies in the organization of censuses and surveys, especially in the processing of data, often resulted in unacceptable delays of several years. By the time data were released they had often become irrelevant for planning. Added to

the organizational problems were conceptual ones making it often impossible to use data generated from successive surveys for long-term or cross-country comparisons.

12. Partially as a response to such deficiencies, specialized ministries and agencies started to set up their own statistical services, sometimes in competition and duplication with national bureaus of statistics. Even though this has helped individual users, provided that primary data collection was well-organized, it nevertheless came at the risk of blurring responsibilities, of losing control over data production and of wasting scarce resources. In countries without functioning co-ordination mechanisms, the type and number of surveys conducted was sometimes more determined by external donor interests than by national priorities. Some areas suffered from being overstudied, while others were hardly touched. It could therefore be no surprise that despite a flurry of activities data series remained marred by incompatibility and inconsistency.

13. At the beginning of the 1990s most African countries have not achieved a balanced and sustainable flow of quantitative information. Moreover, efforts towards achieving those objective were often relaxed under the pressure of reduced resources, domestic as well as external. Experienced professional staff are abandoning important areas like national accounts or basic economic statistics because the available funds do not allow constant and equal support of all core areas. Important innovations, for example the provision of statistical information on the interrelationships between population and environment or the refining of agricultural statistics, cannot be considered by most statistical services except if outside sources can be obtained. On the part of users, this all amounts to the impression that statistical services, and often the data produced by them as well, are fragile and archaic at the same time. The erosion of confidence in the producers and the products sets a downward spiral in motion: less resources are allocated which in turn further demotivate remaining staff and lower their productivity.

14. The economic crisis of the eighties cut deeply into national statistical services as public expenditures were curtailed in many countries. Structural adjustment programmes often demanded sharp reductions in the staffing of the civil service. High fluctuation rates of qualified statistical personnel and low morale and motivation of remaining staff were results of these deteriorating public service conditions. Progress towards building up national statistical capabilities was slowed down or even reversed.

15. Reliance on external assistance therefore tends to increase again. It had been foreseeable that large-scale data collections, like censuses and surveys, would continue to require outside support. But other forms of external dependency are being added: given the deteriorating conditions in the civil service, many statisticians' willingness to stay hinges on receiving allowances from external sources in the context of projects. Individually understandable, this entails the risk for national statistical services of accepting a scope and orientation of projects which may sidetrack from and even undermine national plans and priorities. While balanced work programmes of national statistical offices may still exist pro forma, human resources for their de facto implementation may be concentrating in areas where better remuneration can be obtained.

16. An important factor behind some negative developments of the past was certainly the lack of appreciation for the role of statistics in development planning and monitoring. This often translated into a low priority for quantitative planning and monitoring approaches. But the trend now is moving towards more data, better analysis, better presentation, especially as micro-computer applications give common and easy access to data bases and allow fast and precise compilation. If statisticians do not respond dynamically to the challenges their status may further erode vis-à-vis subject-matter specialists in various ministries. Unsatisfactory legal and administrative setups or insufficient budgetary allocations do not provide a complete explanation for the current problems faced by statistical services. Their tendency towards routine carries the risk of loosing the view for innovation and for a constant questioning of the relevance and adequacy of their products. One of the most detrimental results is the pervasive lack of analysis of statistical data, i.e. of a crucial service to the potential user which could yield professional and public recognition. Given their unique knowledge about data, African statisticians are in a privileged position to conduct thorough quantitative analysis including projections. They could thus also contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics of developments leading to the success or failure of national programmes or international efforts such as the African Priority Programme for Economic Recovery from 1986-1990 (APPER) or the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development from 1986-1990 (UNPAAERD). Especially at times when structural adjustment programmes are cutting deeply into the social fabric of African countries, it is necessary to mobilise all analytical capacities, quantitative and qualitative, to evaluate the acceptability and sustainability of the socio-economic structures they generate.

17. A second important factor contributing to a low profile of statistical services is a lack of proper management. While recognizing the importance of adequate resource endowments, it needs again to be noted that management and motivation are not exclusively dependent on financial factors. A producing office may erode simply because a new management is putting less emphasis on motivation and accountability. Management policies and tools such as career development through in-house training and professional exposure, clear work programmes and transparency of decisions can go a long way towards improving the profile of national statistical services.

Conclusion

18. As has been noted above, African statistical services can point to a number of significant achievements in the course of their relatively young history. Their position has never been an easy one as their dependency on resources drawn from fragile domestic revenues or from donor agencies was almost omnipresent. The main parameters cannot be expected to change radically for the better in the nineties. In the table "Assets and liabilities for the 1990s" which concludes this background discussion key issues that need to be considered in a framework for statistical development in the region have been summarized. Together with the recommendations, they form the background against which the draft Plan of Action (Annex) has been formulated.

19. Since the Fifth Session of the Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Demographers where some of these issues were discussed, there has been very little progress. The recommendations which were made by the secretariat in the document E/ECA/PSD.5/13 still stand and have therefore been included here. Some amendments have been made in light of more detailed information collected by the country-by-country survey on statistical capacity and on the basis of recommendations which emanated from ECA sponsored seminars and working groups.

20. Various actors determine the success or failure of a statistical service and the following recommendations attempt to cover all factors influencing the performance. There is therefore an urgent need for action to be taken jointly by the data producers and users. A first important step is to examine jointly the mutual needs and capacities of both the producers and the users and to thus establish a spirit of co-operation and mutual understanding.

21. The Sixth Session of the Joint Conference is therefore requested to consider this document and, if it so wishes, to amend and refine the draft Plan of Action so that it can be submitted to the Conference of Ministers.

TABLE 1

Assets and liabilities for the 1990s

+ Assets	- Liabilities
+ increasing managerial experience, programme management and transparency of decisions	- low status assigned to statistics and statisticians
	- inadequate statistical legislation
+ greater awareness for importance of statistics by political decision-makers	- unsatisfactory service conditions
	- high fluctuation rate and high training needs
+ increasing calls for expansion into new areas (gender, agriculture, environment, energy) and setting of priorities	- tendency to donor-driven programmes
+ more donor interest (at least in some areas)	- insufficient focus on domestic needs and priorities, especially lack of analysis
+ greater number of trained statisticians ("critical mass")	- insufficient link to planners and other users (for example through user-producer committees)
+ wider use of modern data-processing equipment, especially micro-computers, thus	- lack of links to universities and neglect of research
+ speeding up of data entry and compilation	- lack of integrared data bases
+ greater machine reliability	
+ quality of presentation and speed of dissemination improved	

+ analysis potential increases

+ pervasive qualification of staff, self-training at low cost

+ existence of regional training institutions and professional associations

+ increased research activity in applied statistics at regional training institutes and in national statistical services

+ more analysis of data for use by planners

responsibility of data collection in their respective field. Greater care should be taken to ensure that their work is not duplicated elsewhere. Instead, all efforts should be directed to assisting the ministry to provide reliable and timely data.

Work programme budget

35. A budget document should be prepared which covers the financial year setting out what final outputs will be delivered during the period. Due consideration should be given to the primary users and the anticipated use. They should also contain an evaluation of resource requirements which should indicate the professional and non-professional work months required, the purpose and the cost of field operations, data processing and personal and external relations. Details of this nature will help the ministry or regional budget divisions to evaluate what activities and final outputs they can fund and will show up the inadequate and unrealistic estimates to undertake the inadequate.

Determining users needs

36. Each programme should be subject to a determined procedure for periodical reviewing to meet changing circumstances. Interviews with users should play a fundamental role. After an initial consultation for a comprehensive review of all activities, particularly if a country has a statistical unit, a user group must continually be set up to meet regularly. The Director of Statistics in addition with his staff should periodically meet the statistics group to keep him informed on their work, problems and fields of its activities and requirements in relation to their needs. Such a committee could assist in the coordination of statistical activities in the country.

37. Particulars should be given to users for their approval before an item of an annual programme finalized of such a committee is to establish a clear understanding of data requirements, the benefits from them and a time schedule with consequences for non-inclusion of requested data because of limited resources in a given schedule.

28. Sub-groups for specialized fields such as demographic and social statistics, economic statistics, and natural resources and environment statistics, could be established where specialized statisticians would serve as liaison to the respective fields. These groups should, however, report to the committee on a quarterly or half-yearly basis.

29. One of the first objectives of such a committee should be to initiate the preparation and updating of a directory of institutions collecting, compiling and disseminating statistics in the country, to list all their series with an indication of periods covered, and to create greater and in order form data are machine-retrievable. It should also maintain liaison at their staff and of data processing equipment so that more frequent qualitative and quantitative assessments of the national statistical capability can be made.

30. Conclusions and recommendations of the committee should have an advisory character and its members should report to the policy-making level. International agencies operating in the country, especially when they are interested in data collection activities, ought to have a proper collective to obtain clearance from such a body.

Priorities in data collection

31. The National Statistical Service should establish a list of priorities in relation to major fields having into account the needs of users as evidenced in the user-producer committee discussions. This list should also take into account the priorities established in the country's development plan and define the types of data gaps and problems to be solved and their impacts on socio-economic development and the environment. These such as agriculture, natural resources and environment statistics as well as sub-sectors in each should receive more prominence in their context. Greater spatial disaggregation of data should necessarily entail development. Such priorities will derive the ranking from the list which had been presented at E/ECA/PSD.6/11.

Sources of data

32. National statistical services should try to make optimal use of all sources available to generate the data needs. This implies that the co-ordinating body has to regularly inventorize information on what is available with specifications such as the geographical scope, the minimum coverage, periodicity, lead. On this basis a detailed plan of what is collected, when, how and with what

intensity has to be drawn up. A medium and long-term plan updated and revised on an annual basis should be used as orientation. Such long-term anticipation of statistical development allows to make appropriate provisions for resources both financial and human necessary to implement the programmes for carrying out censuses and surveys.

(ii) Censuses: In drawing up census programmes sufficient time has to be provided for monitoring the results of a population census which has not as has happened be repeated before the results of the previous one are known. A ten-year interval has proved to be very suitable for the requirements of African countries provided that this periodicity is strictly adhered to. In order to make census results available quickly and to a wide range of users further advantage should be taken of new technology for processing and disseminating statistical data.

(iii) Surveys: Surveys promise to be the most prolific source of statistical information for African countries All countries should therefore draw up programmes comprising the results expected and including detailed procedures for processing analysis and dissemination. Interim results should be reviewed for their applicability and usefulness for the specific objectives pursued. Given the desirability of international comparisons standardization should be sought where feasible. This is particularly important for analyzing trends and structures from one census to another.

(iii) Administrative records: There are many statistics more than ever before which are collected for a variety of administrative purposes. Their use should be made of this source. It is a problem that administrative systems usually suffer from many defects and steps should be taken to improve them for statistical purposes. The central statistical bureau should not assume a merely passive role as recipient. The usefulness of administrative records compiled by specialized governmental bodies such as the Ministry of Trade can be maximized through close consultations on record design and content between national statistical services and data users within administration.

Quality control and standards unit

33. In order to improve the quality of information collected, an organizational unit or methods and standards should be set up in each statistical service. One of its functions should be the establishment of quality control measures in all phases of the data collection and compilation process. It should also be responsible for ensuring that standards established in classification systems as well as common concepts and definitions are used in all data collection operations. Co-ordination of research projects in the field of statistics with other agencies and conduct of other research experiments would be handled by this unit.

Statistical Manpower Development Programme

34. The National Statistical Service, jointly with the government civil service organ responsible for manpower development should establish a programme for statistical staff recruitment development and training. Such a programme should incorporate among other things, an attractive scheme of service commensurate with other professions in the government civil service. The scheme of service should avoid paying biased rewards statistical personnel but should include other areas such as data processing, printing, library, which may require special skills in addition to statistics. The training component should take account of not only the unfilled established posts but also the needs of specialized and technical personnel in various fields of statistics. At the same time, in order to ensure a proper balance of statistical production in the various areas, a thorough study of the whole organizational structure of the whole National Statistical Service should be undertaken before such a programme is established.

Training

35. The National Statistical Service, as a matter of urgency should consider various ways of solving the training needs currently being faced at all levels in the statistical profession. A number of strategies need to be pursued to satisfy the continuous requirements.

36. In order to increase the number of qualified professional statisticians capable of analysis and innovation the field, there is a need to establish professional level training at national universities where it is not yet available. At the same time national universities which undertake statistical training should be urged to adopt the guide syllabus which was developed by the ECA as a point of reference for their programmes. This would go a long way in producing the right calibre of statisticians for the

national statistical services. In addition to offering formal degree and diploma courses African statistical training centres should be encouraged to establish short training courses, run workshops, seminars, in areas of interest to serving statistical personnel in government ministries and other organizations such as household surveys, sampling techniques, use of micro-computers, etc.

37. National statistical services should establish in-service statistical training programmes particularly at the middle-level. Short term courses, seminars and workshops should be organized for all levels as a means of improving the statistical skills of the staff. This is particularly important for long-term serving personnel whose need for formal training is not apparent.

Data processing

38. The National Statistical Services should improve their data processing capacity in order to speed up the production of data. They should be ready to decentralise their data processing operation with the hope of achieving efficiency in this field and avoid heavy reliance on the government central computers. Micro-computer applications should be widely adopted. More statisticians should be trained in the use of such computers and peripherals and software packages for data entry, compilation and presentation as well as for analysis and attractive report preparation should be acquired to reduce the reliance of statistical services on professional programmers and systems analysts. For large-scale data handling, there should be a preference for creating or expanding data processing centres within national statistical services. This would reduce the dependency on the government central computer centres, particularly where bottlenecks in such services have created unacceptable back-logs in data processing in the past.

Data dissemination

39. National statistical services should set up or strengthen information and public relations units for data dissemination. This unit should contain a library for NSS publications and those received from elsewhere (national and international). It should be closely linked to emerging national information systems. The unit will also serve as a mechanism through which the primary users of the data will provide a feedback on any deficiencies in the data. These can then be monitored and used for improving data quality in subsequent publications.

40. National statistical services should attempt to establish their own printing unit in order to reduce the reliance on the government and private printers. It may be possible to acquire off-set printing machines for the publication of small-scale reports and current statistics while the large-scale publications should still be produced elsewhere. At the same time, use should be made of new computer technologies such as scanning and desk-top publishing to improve the quality of the publications. Camera-ready outputs could be prepared and sent directly to the printer for publication thus greatly reducing the time lag due to queuing at the printer.

41. The future will see less emphasis on printed paper as far as professional users and analysts of data are concerned. A two-tier approach characterized by the following is recommended to provide ever-better quality printed statistics (including graphs and maps) while at the same time facilitating very quick access of data by principal users. In the present this is done via computer print-outs and tables. In the future, data exchange will be via diskette or modem (link as users gain increasing access to micro-computer technology. This will be a quick means of providing timely data for planners and policy makers. Statistical services should therefore also be involved in material technical innovation. Task forces in order to ensure full comparability of systems utilized in various government offices. This could bring a qualitative change, if not a literal leap forward in computer relevance and technical quality of data.

Data Analysis

42. The national statistical services should consider conducting seminars and workshops for policy makers in order to discuss the various statistical systems. Presentations on user-ware major explain the data could help to evaluate the users the client features of the data in diskettes. Such seminars or workshops were not feasible to organize. They involve a much stronger focus on analysis of the data and presentations as well as on the presentation of data (graphics, maps). Discussions in such workshops will provide a feedback to the national statistical services particularly on the utility of the various data being produced. Regardless, however, experience and surveys in a number of countries have shown conducting such seminars with a very positive response from users. In some cases seminars have also been organized in other areas such as National Accounts. Such efforts need to be strengthened as they also provide important means for statisticians to contribute their often under-rated technical and analytical skills.

External Assistance

43. In order to maximize the benefits of donor assistance for statistical activities, countries should insist on a coherent and integrated approach. They should seek to strengthen the national management of technical assistance offered to them. This implies that priorities established in development work programme budgets should be the guiding principles for external support. The co-ordination of donor activities is imperative so that different donor agencies and countries can support various items or components within the programme without duplicating work over short time spans.

44. The National Statistical Services should work jointly with the government organs responsible for securing assistance to solicit more external financing for the support of those statistical activities that have failed to get local financing. Special attention should be paid to those projects which are likely to linger because of lack of foreign exchange to acquire equipment from outside or because external training is needed in specialized and technical areas of statistics. Both these components are so important for building up the national statistical capacity and as appropriately qualified statisticians tend to grow rapid upward mobility, external assistance programmes need to focus on these aspects. Emphasis also needs to be given to the provision of short training courses for serving statistical personnel and on-the-job training in the situation where technical assistance personnel are involved. They could thus truly promote development in the countries of the African region.

C. Tasks for regional co-operation

Advisory services

45. To-date ECA and other agencies have provided advisory services to African countries in the fields of censuses, demographic and social statistics, data processing, data base development, statistical organization and training, household surveys and basic economic statistics including national accounts. Other areas have been industrial, trade and price statistics. These should continue on a short term basis and should be aimed at building self-reliance in the statistical offices. The development and use of administrative sources in the compilation of the various social statistics needs to be increased. Areas under the area of national accounts, basic economic statistics, trade and industrial statistics, social statistics, covering the areas of labour, migration and labour should also be mentioned.

Research in statistical methods

46. Research in the methodology for statistics has so far received very little attention in Africa. The majority of the methods have been applied on their face value without research into their adaptation to African conditions. The same is true of equipment such as that for measuring distances etc. Statistical training institutions including UNECA sponsored should undertake this research in view of the limited sustainability of such research at their institutions. Where experiments need to be conducted at the country level, statistical services should host such experiments to enable sub-regional or country comparisons. Statistical training institutions and national statistical services should undertake their role of research more seriously.

47. The linkage of statistical services with training institutions has so far been weak and informal. There is need to formulate and strengthen this linkage, in particular to encourage trainers at statistical training institutions to be attached for a certain period at national statistical services and vice versa. Such linkage will promote research as well as proper understanding of the activities of the various agencies.

DRAFT PLAN OF ACTION

INTRODUCTION

1. By the year 2000, African statistics need to reach a stage where they can play their rightful role in assisting planning, decision-making including monitoring and evaluation of social and economic development. To this end a commitment of African Governments to truly build up national capacities for collecting, compiling, analysing and disseminating statistics is necessary and needs to be translated into a range of activities by both users and producers of statistical information.

2. The objective of this plan of action is to achieve a measurable level of self-sufficiency in statistical production and to improve the relevance of data produced in African countries by the end of this century. It would be unrealistic to expect that all national statistical systems would have reached satisfactory levels of performance by then, but quantitative and qualitative targets could be set in each country to enable evaluation of achivement. They could, for example, include the number of surveys produced, the number of statisticians trained and retained in the service and compare evaluations by users of the statistical service at the beginning and at the end of the nineties according to a standard questionnaire.

3. The draft plan covers three levels of action namely the national, regional and international community levels. At the national level the government is at the heart of the action plan followed by specific actions covering resource mobilisation, statistical training, statistical committees, organization of National Statistical Services (NSS) linkage of the NSS with training institutions and national seminars. Although national seminars are expected to focus on the other actions as well they should be discussed separately in the draft plan of action.

ACTION AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

The African Governments

4. African Governments should set up the institutional framework for the operation of national statistical services (NSS). The support given to NSS will be determined by the extent that decision-makers recognize the importance of quantitative approaches for informed decision-making and act on two important areas: first, in improving the service conditions and creating satisfactory and fair remuneration levels for statisticians; secondly, in assigning a status to statistical services which reflects the vital role that information will increasingly assume in the nineties. This could lead statistical services to become independent and attain a level of high integrity.

5. The following suggested actions in the plan are based on two premises:

- that Governments are recognizing the importance of statistical information and are therefore sensitive to revamping the systems; and

- that increased communication before, during and after the statistical production process with the user community is an important resource in itself which, once started, would generate additional resources through the attractiveness of its product.

Resource mobilization

6. Many African governments increased resources for developing their statistical systems immediately after independence. At the same time international and bilateral technical and financial resources were expanded to help this development. These efforts contributed to further advance in the statistical systems of most African countries in the 1960s and 1970s. Staff were recruited, existing ones further trained and much useful quantitative information collected and analysed. However, by the late 1970s and during the 1980s there were perceptible reverses of this trend as the continent went through severe economic crisis. this was precisely when improved statistical information was needed for short-term economic management and long-term planning.

7. Whatever the difficulties and pitfalls, an improvement of the statistical system constitutes an integral part of economic and social development. Most people in government acknowledge that statistics are essential but do not give it strong political and financial support.

8. Countries are now called upon to give further consideration to resource mobilization for statistical development. The following are among some possible options:

(a) Establishment of a Statistical Development Fund with contributions from the public and private sectors.

(i) A developed and or improved statistical system benefits the private as well as the public sector. Established private sector undertakings should contribute directly to such development by giving grants, awarding fellowships, providing needed equipment (e.g. micro-computer) for research, etc.

(ii) Government must undertake to, as much as possible, increase and sustain its budgetary appropriations to statistics. Government could also make subventions, and provide adequte incentives to enable the statistical service to recruit and retain qualified personnel.

(b) Adequate and reliable statistics are needed to design, monitor and evaluate projects. In drawing up such projects it may be worth considering the idea of including a small amount to the project cost as contribution to the statistical development of the country.

(c) It is often said that 'bankable' projects stand a fair chance of attracting donor support. While this is true, it is too often forgotten that recurrent activities of most statistical services cannot be translated into 'bankable' projects. Perhaps the time has come when the concept of an African Statistical Development Fund should be translated into reality with the support of the international donor community. Donor Conferences could be possible source of such funding.

Statistical Training

9. Statistical training in Africa has so far concentrated on basic degree, diploma and certificates offered at undergraduate, postgraduate, middle level training centres including in-service training programmes offered at some National Statistical Offices and middle level training centres at national level.

10. While these training programmes will continue to be promoted and expanded, there is need for statistical training institutions at the national level to organize specialised training courses of short duration in fields such as household surveys (covering aspects such as sample designs, data processing, field techniques, etc.), national accounts, economic statistics, industrial, trade and agricultural statistics, etc. for the benefit of serving statistical and other personnel including those personnel outside the statistical service but engaged in planning activities.

11. National Statistical Offices should prepare statistical development programmes which would help them to utilize the available training facilities and those to be established to the maximum possible.

Statistical Committees

12. Statistical committees such as user-producer or producer-producer should be reactivated in countries where these exist or should be initiated in countries where these do not as yet exist. These committees enable exchange of views regarding development of statistics, use of the available statistics and the setting of priorities for statistical activities in the country.

13. Many national statistical Offices have used informal contact with users to discuss a number of issues facing their development of statistics. These should be encouraged where they have been found to be effective. The formation or reactivation of the statistical committees at the country level should be undertaken by the National Statistical Office in collaboration with the ministry responsible for statistics in the country.

Organization of National Statistical Services (NSS)

14. In view of the inadequate organizational aspects of National Statistical Services (NSS) there is need to examine and restructure a number of these services. The structural set up at the head office and in line ministries statistical units and the establishment of regional statistical offices should be examined carefully and in detail. At the NSS headquarters, the establishment

of a number of units such as the quality control and standards, unit and the publication and information unit would assist the promotion of research, enforcement of statistical standards and establishment of public relations with those outside the NSS headquarters.

15. The location and status of the NSS has been discussed extensively at statistical meetings. In considering the organizational aspects of the NSS, account should be taken of the locational aspects and also the legal basis on which it operates.

Linkage of the NSS with training institutions

16. The linkage of NSS with statistical and other training institutions has in many African countries been weak. This to some extent has hampered the development at training institutions of appropriate curricula for the students which would help them in their future career and also the development of research in statistical techniques which are used by those in the field and the office.

17. This linkage should be promoted either through projects, exchange of personnel, teaching activities, or other appropriate mechanisms to enable beneficial effects regarding the development of statistics in the country.

National seminars

18. National statistical seminars covering specific areas should be organized in order to determine whether current statistical production is in accordance with the country's development objectives anticipated for the period. The result of the exercise should be a ten-year statistical development plan which would be the guide and framework for annual or biennial national statistical work programmes. Seminars should be organised for statistical personnel only, planners only and joint planners and statistical personnel. The planners should include experts in economic and physical planning.

19. Participation for all seminars should be sought from government as well as research and training institution. As these seminars should spell out possibilities as well as limitations of quantitative approaches, a wide range of scientific methods need to be represented. They should also provide a basis for further close interaction between the universities/specialised training institutions and National Statistical Offices in order to focus on research and training more closely to the principal needs and, on the other hand, to inject and maintain a stronger element of research interests and analysis into national statistical services.

20. The scope and technical detail of the task may require the splitting up of such seminars into working groups for carrying out special assignments (e.g. drafting of improved statistical legislation, management strategies, staff development plans, preparation of work programme budgets, concepts for integrating data bases, computer applications for special analytical purposes, spatial analysis tools, formulating outlines for research projects and statistical training programmes, broad outline for external resource requirements and guidelines for project implementation dissemination policies, public relations).

21. One important objective to be achieved with such an approach would be to provide input into user-producer or producer-producer committees. These Committees will ultimately carry on the work, refine the objectives and define in detail what should be achieved over shorter time periods.

22. A second objective would be the formulation of guidelines for co-ordinating and improving domestic management of externally-funded projects and programmes. Issues such as the conformity of projects with national strategies and the allocation of internal resources to projects (counter-part arrangements) would need to be addressed.

23. It is assumed that the resources for holding such seminars, will come from domestic sources and in exceptional circumstances from donor agencies. As will be spelled out below in the section on "International support", some specific tasks may be supported (e.g. through technical reports and regional seminars).

24. The following suggested list of a series of specialized seminars should be considered with varying scope and intensity depending on respective national needs.

I. General review of the role and functions of NSS

(a) Establishment of statistical priorities

(i) Identification of topics and approximate weights in resource allocation (targets);

(ii) Formulation of a minimum programme and additional modules catering to specific national (or regional) needs;

(iii) Balancing short-term needs (timeliness) against statistical standards (reliability);

(b) Establishment of procedural priorities

(i) Expansion of analysis, including projections and forecasting;

(ii) Improvement in presentation methods (graphs, maps);

(iii) Increase of user interaction through workshops providing analysis of census and survey results;

(iv) Orientation towards a service and product-oriented approach to statistical production (in light of possible competitors);

II. Organisational and legal framework conditions for NSS

(a) Adequacy of location, supervision and status ("upstream")

(b) Legal basis for statistical organisation and production.

(c) Organisational structure of national statistical office, regional statistical offices and line ministries offices.

(d) Formal and informal arrangement for identifying and co-ordinating statistical activities.

(e) User-producer interaction in formulating and evaluating statistical production.

(f) International co-operation among countries at the sub-regional level (exchange of experience, experts).

(g) Producer-producer interaction in the improvement of statistical production.

III. Management of statistical services

(a) Formal and informal hierarchies; process and transparency of decisionmaking; staff-management relations; remuneration levels within the whole NSS and in relation to equivalent professions in ministries.

(b) Process of formulating, implementing and monitoring work programme; drafting of budget proposals and project documents to donors; adequacy of administrative and management support; evaluation methods (internal and external).

ACTION AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

25. At the regional level a number of actions need to be promoted. These cover the following areas:

Regional Advisory Services

26. These have mainly been provided by the Economic Commission for Africa through regionally supported projects such as the Statistical Development Programme for Africa (SDPA) Project and the Regional Advisory Service in Demographic and Social Statistics (RASDS). A number of Regional Advisers visit African countries on request to advise in specific areas of population censuses, cartography, census data processing, sampling in the field of censuses and surveys, household surveys, basic economic statistics including national accounts, etc. These advisory services should be encouraged and should be provided in specific areas of need. The reliance by countries on long-term experts should be further reduced and be replaced by these advisory services or short term experts where seriously needed.

Regional, sub-regional meetings

27. These are in the form of seminars, workshops and training courses and have been provided before at the regional or sub-regional levels. They should be continued to promote exchange of experiences and knowledge between countries. ECA should continue to play a role in organizing and hosting some of these meetings. Donor agencies should be encouraged to finance some of the meetings.

Training institutions

28. So far STPA and non-STPA centres have provided the regional facilities for training. These should continue to be encouraged in particular the development of teaching programmes, teaching materials, post-graduate teaching and research, teaching of specialised courses of direct relevance to African countries, etc. The training facilities should be expanded and be made more relevant to the African conditions.

African Statistical Association (AFSA)

29. Support by African Governments should continue to be provided to the AFSA which was created in March 1984 by those statisticians wo attended the Third Session of the Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Demographers. This association will promote exchange of regional issues on statistics, research and regional co-operation.

Technical co-operation

30. There has so far been very little technical co-operation among African countries in the field of statistics. This should be encouraged in the nineties in particular within the framework of TCDC of the United Nations. Related to this is the continued promotion of national professionals in the countries in view of the existence of experts who can undertake certain tasks.

ACTION AT THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY LEVEL

31. The role of the international community (donors) including inter-government organizations needs to be recognized and promoted in the development of statistics in Africa.

32. Most of the donor community has supported ongoing activities of national statistical services and also initiated new projects. These projects have in some cases been purely of interest to them and having very little or no relevance to the development policy of the country. Donors should finance project which are in line with the statistical development programme of the NSS.

33. With respect to technical assistance personnel, these should be fielded, for a very short time, covering areas of real need. The aim should be that of capacity building. Training of either on the job or short-term courses should be part and parcel of this technical assistance. The tendency to provide equipment which either is obsolete or has no maintainance support in the country should be avoided. Technical assistance personnel should avoid production of the outputs themselves instead they should play their advisory role adequately.

34. In addition to providing technical support and funds for specific project, the evaluation of the impact of the assistance should be conducted in collaboration with national authorities either at the end of the assistance period if it is short or at regularly intervals if it is a long term type of assistance.

35. Co-ordination among donors should be even more improved to enable reduction or eradication of duplication of assistance to the NSS.